

**AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS:**

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions and listings of claims in the application:

1. (original) A method for maintaining and promoting hair thickening comprising increasing the expression of keratinocyte growth factor (FGF-7) in hair follicle cells.

2. (original) A method according to claim 1, wherein expression of the FGF-7 is increased by applying to the scalp an external skin preparation containing one or more types of agents that increase the expression of FGF-7 in hair follicle cells selected from the group consisting of adenosine, adenosine 5'-phosphoric acid, adenosine 5'-phosphate, CCPA (2-chloro-N<sup>6</sup>-cyclopentyladenosine), C1-IB-MECA (2-chloro-N<sup>6</sup>-(3-iodobenzyl)-9-[5-(methylcarbamoyl)- $\beta$ -D-ribofuranosyl]adenine) and NECA (N-ethylcarboxyamido-adenosine).

3. (original) A method according to claim 2, wherein at least one type of the agent that increases expression of FGF-7 in the hair follicle cells is adenosine.

4. (currently amended) A method according to ~~any of claims 1 to 3~~ claim 1, wherein the hair follicle cells are dermal

papilla cells or outer root sheath cells.

5. (original) A composition for increasing expression of FGF-7 comprising as an active component thereof an agent selected from the group consisting of adenosine, adenosine 5'-phosphoric acid, adenosine 5'-phosphate, CCPA, C1-IB-MECA and NECA.

6. (original) A composition according to claim 5, wherein at least one type of the agents is adenosine.

7. (currently amended) A composition according to claim 5, [[or 6]] that is an external skin preparation that maintains and promotes hair thickening by being applied to the scalp.

8. (original) A method for screening agents that maintain and promote hair thickening, comprising: applying a candidate agent to cells, and selecting an agent that increases the expression of FGF-7 in said cells.

9. (original) A method according to claim 8, wherein increased expression of FGF-7 in the cells is determined by measuring the amount of mRNA that encodes FGF-7 extracted from the cells.

10. (currently amended) A method according to claim 8 [[or

9]], wherein the cells are dermal papilla cells, immortalized dermal papilla cells or outer root sheath cells.

11. (new) A method according to claim 2, wherein the hair follicle cells are dermal papilla cells or outer root sheath cells.

12. (new) A method according to claim 3, wherein the hair follicle cells are dermal papilla cells or outer root sheath cells.

13. (new) A composition according to claim 6 that is an external skin preparation that maintains and promotes hair thickening by being applied to the scalp.

14. (new) A method according to claim 9, wherein the cells are dermal papilla cells, immortalized dermal papilla cells or outer root sheath cells.